What is CAR T cell therapy?
Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T cell therapy is a treatment for some types of leukemia and non-Hodgkin lymphoma—two kinds of blood cancer. T cells are part of your immune system. They work by “hooking” onto cancer cells and killing them.

In CAR T cell therapy, doctors take T cells from your blood and add a new “hook” called a CAR to them. Together, these are called CAR T cells. You get the CAR T cells back through an infusion into a vein. The CAR T cells find, attack, and kill the cancer cells in your body.

What are the side effects?
CAR T cell therapy can have serious side effects. Your transplant team will watch for them. It’s important that you and your caregivers know the signs of these side effects. Treating the side effects early can help you recover.

Cytokine Release Syndrome
Cytokine release syndrome (CRS) is the most common side effect of CAR T therapy. It can happen 1 day to 30 days after your CAR T infusion. CRS may go away quickly or last weeks. You may need to stay in the hospital.

Infections
Severe or life-threatening infections can happen after CAR T cell therapy.

Mental Changes
CAR T cells can cause temporary changes in your brain. These changes can make you feel and act differently. This can happen days to weeks after your infusion. The changes may last for days or weeks. They usually go away on their own with no long-term problems. Your transplant team may give you medicine to help.

Graft-versus-Host Disease
If you had an allogeneic stem cell transplant and get CAR T cells from your donor, you have a risk to get graft-versus-host disease (GVHD). GVHD can affect your skin, liver, and gastrointestinal (GI) tract.

What problems should I watch for?
Call your transplant team right away if you have any of these signs that a problem might be happening.

Signs of CRS or Infection
- Bleeding
- Body aches, chills, or shivering
- Hard time breathing
- Dizziness
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Fever of 100.4°F or greater
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Pain when urinating
- Rash
- Red or swollen place on the body
- Sore throat or coughing

Signs of Mental Changes
- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Hard time sleeping
- Hard time speaking
- Feeling very tired or weak
- Dizziness
- Hallucinations
- Headache
- Seizures
- Uncontrollable shaking

The people closest to you are often the first to notice any mental changes. It is important that they call your transplant team right away if you have the signs above.

Signs of GVHD
- Rash
- Diarrhea
- Yellowing of skin or eyes

If you have any of the signs listed here or if you have any concerns, call your transplant team right away.

Monday–Friday, 7 a.m.–5 p.m.
Nurse line: 801-587-4686
BMT/Hematology Clinic: 801-585-2626

Monday–Friday after 5 p.m., weekends, and holidays
Call the hospital operator: 801-587-7000
Ask for the BMT doctor.